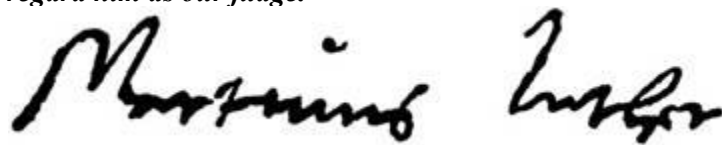


*"It's very difficult for a person to believe that God is gracious. The human heart can't grasp this. What happened in my case? I was once terrified by the sacrament which Dr. Staupitz carried in a procession in Eisleben on the feast of Corpus Christi. I went along in the procession and wore the dress of a priest. Afterward I made confession to Dr. Staupitz, and he said to me, 'Your thought is not of Christ.' With this word he comforted me well. This is the way we are. Christ offers himself to us together with the forgiveness of sins, and yet we flee from his face.*

*This also happened to me as a boy in my homeland when we sang in order to gather sausages. (this is a reference to students begging for money for their university education). A townsman jokingly cried out, 'What are you boys up to? May this or that evil overtake you!' At that same time he ran toward us with two sausages. With my companion I took to my feet and ran away from the man who was offering his gift. This is precisely what happens to us in our relation to God. He gave us Christ with all his gifts, and yet we flee from him and regard him as our judge."*

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Martin Luther". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'L'.

**Commentary:** Living in a time of instant communications and limiting teaching students to only pass their tests, we forget that faith in God is a lifelong process of ups and downs, asking questions, and searching for answers. Many people lose faith because they feel (are) judged by someone who is a "Christian." To be a Christian is to be Christ-like! However, the "Real Christians of 'New Jersey'" are also imperfect Christians. The Corpus Christi procession Luther speaks of above was most likely held on June 7, 1515. An important part of Renaissance life is that religion was part of the public square and the public discussion. Just think about how the world wide web enables us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to share God with each other with the click of a "Send" button. If you are running away from Jesus, recalculate your spiritual GPS and turn towards Him! Please note - God is not far away - he is closer than we think.

**Question:** With all the blessings we have, why do you think it is difficult to believe that God is good – forgiving, loving, enabling?